STATE

Thousands ignore boycott, attend gay rodeo

By **Louis Aguilar**
Gazette Telegraph

DENVER — More than 3,000 people are watching or competing in the city's 11th annual gay rodeo this weekend.

They're ignoring the national call of gay rights supporters to boycott the state over Amendment 2. The measure, passed by 53 percent of state voters in November, would ban laws protecting homosexuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

"We are a non-political organization. We came to have a good time," said Roger Bergmann, president of the International Gay Rodeo Association, which sponsored the event.

"No one thought this would be different this year. I don't think anyone would question our stance on gay rights. Most of us really like Denver" he said. The 150 contestants and hundreds of spectators came from across the nation and Canada. The event began Saturday and ends today at the National Western Stock Show stadium.

> "You wouldn't even know it was a gay rodeo unless you were told."
>
> **Rodeo official Glenn Gore**

Organizers said they never entertained the idea of endorsing the boycotting.

"The boycott . . . is not useful. It's not good to isolate," said Wayne Jakino, one of the founders of the International Gay Rodeo Association. Others said they felt a loyalty to Denver because some city residents played a key role in founding the association.

The organization has more than 8,000 members.

Thursday night, when rodeo fans jammed Jakino's country-and-western bar in Denver, thoughts of boycotts seemed far away. Many in the crowd wore their best western duds and, as the country band began to play, some men politely asked other men to dance. As far as bar scenes go, the evening was pretty tame. So too is the rodeo itself, officials contend.

"I guess some people expect something risque, but you wouldn't even know it was a gay rodeo unless you were told," said Glenn Gore, chairman of the group's board of trustees.

Gay rodeo participants will head to Colorado Springs in September. The third annual event at Penrose Stadium is expected to draw about 150 participants and 300 spectators.

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plegate, association president.

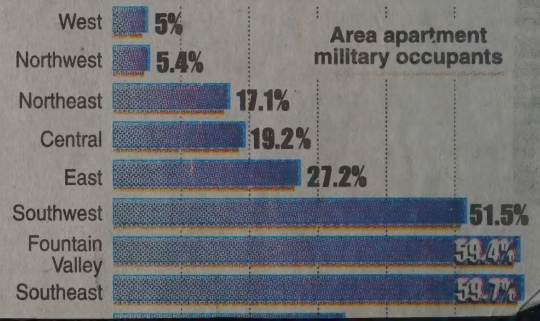
But Roger Bruhn, owner of the Apartment Guide, a company which tries to match renters with apartments, is not as optimistic.

"Since 1986, apartment owners in town have done nothing but lose money," he said. "Finally it has turned around, and people will be very leery of doing anything to increase their risk and jeopardize that."

The housing market today is dramatically different than two years ago when vacancies exceeded 12 percent, rents were at least $100 lower and apartment owners were offering deals all over town.

Thanks to an influx of new business (and, in turn, residents), the vacancy rate has dropped

Trich Redman/Gazette Telegraph

Who pays the rent?

About one-third of the county's 35,000 apartments are rented by service members, mostly soldiers from Fort Carson. If the Army post is shut down during the next round of base closures in 1995, the loss could devastate some complexes.